

**Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
**Executive Office of Environmental Affairs ■ MEPA Office**  
**ENF Environmental Notification Form**

<i>For Office Use Only</i> <i>Executive Office of Environmental Affairs</i>	
EOEA No.:	<u>13935</u>
MEPA Analyst:	<u>Holly Johnson</u>
Phone: 617-626-	<u>1023</u>

The information requested on this form must be completed to begin MEPA Review in accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act, 301 CMR 11.00.

Project Name: I-91 at Route 9 (Interchange 19) Interchange Improvement Project		
Street: I-91 and Route 9		
Municipality: Northampton	Watershed: Connecticut	
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 18 695985 E 4689501N Mount Holyoke Quad	Latitude: 42.33° N	Longitude: 72.62 W
Estimated commencement date: 2010	Estimated completion date: 2012	
Approximate cost: \$11,100,000 (2006 dollars)	Status of project design: Pre-25 Percent	
Proponent: Massachusetts Highway Department		
Street: 10 Park Plaza		
Municipality: Boston	State: MA	Zip Code: 02116
Name of Contact Person From Whom Copies of this ENF May Be Obtained: Grace Arthur		
Firm/Agency: Massachusetts Highway Dept.	Street: 10 Park Plaza, Room 4260	
Municipality: Boston	State: MA	Zip Code: 02116
Phone: 617-973-8251	Fax: 617-973-8879	E-mail: <u>Grace.Arthur@mhd.state.ma.us</u>

Does this project meet or exceed a mandatory EIR threshold (see 301 CMR 11.03)?  Yes  No  
 Has this project been filed with MEPA before?  Yes (EOEA No. \_\_\_\_\_)  No  
 Has any project on this site been filed with MEPA before?  Yes (EOEA No. \_\_\_\_\_)  No  
 Is this an Expanded ENF (see 301 CMR 11.05(7)) requesting:

a Single EIR? (see 301 CMR 11.06(8))  Yes  No  
 a Special Review Procedure? (see 301 CMR 11.09)  Yes  No  
 a Waiver of mandatory EIR? (see 301 CMR 11.11)  Yes  No  
 a Phase I Waiver? (see 301 CMR 11.11)  Yes  No

Identify any financial assistance or land transfer from an agency of the Commonwealth, including the agency name and the amount of funding or land area (in acres): Projects funded by MassHighway are typically 80 percent federally funded and 20 percent state funded

Are you requesting coordinated review with any other federal, state, regional, or local agency?  
 Yes (Specify \_\_\_\_\_)  No

List Local or Federal Permits and Approvals: Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, National Environmental Policy Act (C E or Environmental Assessment), Northampton Concom - OOC Section 401 Water Quality Certification, Section 404 USACE Permit, NPDES Construction General Permit

Which ENF or EIR review threshold(s) does the project meet or exceed (see 301 GMR 11.03):

- |                                 |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Land   | <input type="checkbox"/> Rare Species | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Wetlands, Waterways, & Tidelands |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water  | <input type="checkbox"/> Wastewater   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Energy | <input type="checkbox"/> Air          | <input type="checkbox"/> Solid & Hazardous Waste                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ACEC   | <input type="checkbox"/> Regulations  | <input type="checkbox"/> Historical & Archaeological Resources       |

Summary of Project Size & Environmental Impacts	Existing	Change	Total	State Permits & Approvals
<b>LAND</b>				<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Order of Conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Superseding Order of Conditions <input type="checkbox"/> Chapter 91 License <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 401 Water Quality Certification <input type="checkbox"/> MHD or MDC Access Permit <input type="checkbox"/> Water Management Act Permit  <input type="checkbox"/> New Source Approval  <input type="checkbox"/> DEP or MWRA Sewer Connection/ Extension Permit <input type="checkbox"/> Other Permits (including Legislative Approvals) – Specify: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Total site acreage	6.7 acres			
New acres of land altered		3.6 acres		
Acres of impervious area	3.1 acres	2.5 acres	5.6 acres	
Square feet of new bordering vegetated wetlands alteration		None		
Square feet of new other wetland alteration		4,000 sf Riverfront Area, 3.8 acres BLSF		
Acres of new non-water dependent use of tidelands or waterways		None		
<b>STRUCTURES</b>				
Gross square footage				
Number of housing units				
Maximum height (in feet)				
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>				
Vehicle trips per day				
Parking spaces				
<b>WASTEWATER</b>				
Gallons/day (GPD) of water use				
GPD water withdrawal				
GPD wastewater generation/ treatment				
Length of water/sewer mains				

**CONSERVATION LAND:**

Will the project involve the conversion of public parkland or other Article 97 public natural resources to any purpose not in accordance with Article 97?  Yes (Specify \_\_\_\_\_)  No

Will it involve the release of any conservation restriction, preservation restriction, agricultural preservation restriction, or watershed preservation restriction?  Yes (Specify \_\_\_\_\_)  No

**RARE SPECIES:** Does the project site include Estimated Habitat of Rare Species, Vernal Pools, Priority Sites of Rare Species, or Exemplary Natural Communities?

Yes (Specify Project is within Estimated Habitat (EH 874) and Priority Habitat (PH 1233))  No

**HISTORICAL / ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES:** Does the project site include any structure, site or district listed in the State Register of Historic Place or the inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth?

Yes (Specify \_\_\_\_\_)  No

If yes, does the project involve any demolition or destruction of any listed or inventoried historic or archaeological resources?  Yes (Specify \_\_\_\_\_)  No

**AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN:** Is the project in or adjacent to an Area of Critical Environmental Concern?  Yes (Specify \_\_\_\_\_)  No

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** The project description should include (a) a description of the project site, (b) a description of both on-site and off-site alternatives and the impacts associated with each alternative, and (c) potential on-site and off-site mitigation measures for each alternative

The Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway) is proposing to reconfigure the I-91/Route 9 Interchange (Interchange 19) to provide access in all directions to relieve traffic congestion and improve safety at the interchange (see Figures 1 and 2).

Traffic congestion and safety problems in the Interchange 19 area can be attributed to three factors: 1) Interchange 19 is only a partial highway interchange, 2) the volume of traffic on Route 9 is increasing, and 3) there is a strong reliance on the Calvin Coolidge Bridge (Route 9) as a means to cross the Connecticut River. These factors are discussed below.

Traffic congestion in the Interchange 19 area occurs because the I-91/Route 9 Interchange provides only a northbound exit ramp and a southbound entrance ramp (see Figure 3). Therefore, motorists headed to I-91 northbound from Route 9 must travel 1.5 miles north along Damon Road and King Street to use the I-91/King Street Interchange (Interchange 20). Conversely, motorists traveling south on I-91 toward Route 9 must exit I-91 at Interchange 20 and use King Street and Damon Road. Traffic volumes on Damon Road and King Street exceed 19,000 vehicles per day (vpd). As a result, the signalized intersection at I-91/Route 9/Damon Road operates at a Level of Service (LOS) E/F during the evening peak period. This intersection and the intersection of Damon Road and King Street are listed by MassHighway as High Crash Locations.

Second, increasing traffic volumes along Route 9 contributes to worsening congestion. Traffic volumes on Route 9 at the Coolidge Bridge are approximately 34,000 vehicles per day (vpd). These volumes are forecast to increase to nearly 42,000 vpd by 2025. These high traffic volumes are partially attributable to increasing commercial development along the Route 9 corridor and the 25,000 students and 8,000 employees of the five area colleges.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The five area colleges include UMass -Amherst, Amherst College, Mount Holyoke College, Smith College, and Hampshire College

Third, motorists traveling between the Northampton area and the Hadley/Amherst area have few reasonable alternatives to using Route 9 through the interchange area because the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Bridge (Route 9 over the Connecticut River) is immediately east of this interchange. Alternative roadway crossings of the Connecticut River north and south of the bridge are each approximately 10 miles away.

To develop a comprehensive program of regional solutions to transportation congestion and safety problems at numerous locations within the central Pioneer Valley, the Executive Office of Transportation Office of Transportation Planning and MassHighway conducted a transportation study, titled *Connecticut River Crossing Transportation Study* (See Appendix A for the study's Executive Summary. The entire study is available on CD from MassHighway upon request).

A major component of the *Connecticut River Crossing Transportation Study* was public participation. A Study Advisory Group (SAG) was formed to provide a forum to collaboratively develop solutions to existing and future transportation problems in the study area (see Appendix B for the membership of the SAG). In addition to regular meetings with the SAG, public input was solicited through public informational meetings and outreach meetings with local officials and planning agencies.

During this study, the SAG developed evaluation criteria to help measure the effectiveness of potential alternatives (referred to as "concepts") in meeting study goals and to help guide recommendations. The six evaluation criteria were traffic flow, safety, environmental effects, neighborhood effects, business considerations, and cost and schedule. Based on these criteria, proposed concepts were evaluated and, ultimately, a group of 12 recommended concepts were chosen to relieve traffic congestion and improve safety in the central Pioneer Valley. These recommended concepts included five short-term improvements, five medium-term improvements, and two long-term improvements (see Appendix A, Figure ES-2).

This ENF concerns the I-91 at Route 9 (Interchange 19) Interchange Improvement Project, one of the two long-term improvements recommended by the study. Concept 15 was chosen from among a group of six concepts that were considered for Interchange 19 (see Figures 4 through 10). All six concepts and the reasons why they were, or were not chosen, are described in Appendix C.

The preferred alternative, Concept 15, includes the following major construction elements:

- Construction of a new I-91 southbound exit ramp to Route 9, including new traffic signals at the intersection of Route 9 and the I-91 southbound entrance and exit ramps;
- Realignment and lengthening of the Route 9 to I-91 southbound entrance ramp;
- Construction of a new exit ramp from I-91 northbound to Damon Road;
- Construction of a new entrance ramp from Damon Road to I-91 northbound;
- Reconstruction of the I-91 northbound exit ramp to Route 9, including the elimination of

- left turns onto Route 9 westbound; and
- Reconstruction and widening of Route 9 within the Interchange 19 area, including construction of additional turning lanes at the intersection of Route 9 and Damon Road.

A new I-91 northbound exit ramp to Damon Road would allow more direct access to Route 9 westbound and allow the existing I-91 northbound exit ramp to Route 9 to become a right-turn only ramp to Route 9 eastbound, improving the efficiency of the traffic signal at the Route 9/Damon Road intersection. The new Damon Road to I-91 northbound entrance ramp would allow more direct access to I-91 northbound from Route 9.

Additionally, the relocation of the Route 9 to I-91 southbound entrance ramp would provide a longer turning lane between the Route 9/Damon Road intersection and the Route 9/I-91 southbound intersection. The new I-91 southbound exit ramp to Route 9 will allow direct access to Route 9 from I-91 southbound.

A GIS-level analysis of the environmental resources within the Interchange 19 project area revealed the presence of 100-year floodplain, Riverfront Area and Estimated Habitat/Priority Habitat of Rare Species (See Figure 3). Specifically, an area of 100-year floodplain associated with the Connecticut River exists east of Interchange 19. Based on a GIS-level analysis, the proposed I-91 southbound exit and entrance ramps would affect an estimated 3.8 acres of 100-year floodplain. During the project design process, MassHighway will seek to minimize impact to this floodplain area.

The project area intersects Estimated Habitat (EH 874) and Priority Habitat (PH 1233). This area is a previously developed, upland area in eastern portion of the project area. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program indicated in their letter, dated September 14, 2006 (Appendix D), that rare fish, bird, mussel, and dragonfly species have been found in the vicinity of the project area.

The *Connecticut River Crossing Transportation Study* took into account several other transportation projects in the immediate area of Interchange 19 that are in various stages of design and/or construction. These projects include the recently completed rehabilitation and widening (from three lanes to four) of the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Bridge and the ongoing reconstruction and widening (from two lanes to four) of Route 9 in Hadley from Aqua Vitae Road east to Whalley Street (EOEA #11628). Two other notable projects in the area are under design; the reconstruction and signalization of the intersection of Route 9 and Route 47 in Hadley and the reconstruction of Damon Road (EOEA # 12221) which includes the construction of a pedestrian tunnel under Damon Road to accommodate the extension of the Norwottuck Rail Trail to Woodmont Road in Northampton.

The reconstruction of Damon Road, as depicted in Figures 4, 6, 8, and 9, is under design as a separate contract. This project underwent MEPA review in May 2000 (EOEA No.12221).

In accordance with its Type I Noise Policy, MassHighway conducted an acoustical analysis to

determine if the proposed improvements will result in noise impacts to adjacent residential properties. This analysis concluded that the Marshall Street neighborhood adjacent to I-91 is impacted by highway noise and that the construction of a noise barrier in this neighborhood is feasible and reasonable. If acceptable to the residents of the neighborhood, a noise barrier approximately 12 feet high and 1,300 feet long, will be constructed to reduce highway noise levels. The location of the proposed noise barrier is depicted on Figure 4.

By improving existing transportation infrastructure, the I-91 at Route 9 Interchange Project complies with the Commonwealth's Fix-It-First Policy. The Fix-It-First Policy is a statewide commitment to the repair and maintenance of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, transit systems, public housing, historic structures, public parks, skating rinks, and swimming pools.

The proposed project exceeds MEPA review thresholds for Transportation. In accordance with the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.03 (6)(b)1.b., 11.03 (6)(b)2.a., 11.03(3)(b)1.f., and 301 CMR 11.03 (6)(b) 1.a.; an ENF is required because the project requires the widening of an existing roadway for one-half or more miles; alters terrain ten or more feet from the existing roadway for one-half or more miles; results in the alteration of one-half or more acres of wetlands; and will result in the construction of 0.9 miles of new roadway.